

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15926

FROM VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, RO, VT
SUBJECT: STATUS OF VATICAN-ROMANIAN NEGOTIATIONS

1. VATICAN OFFICIAL WILL DEPART OCTOBER 2 FOR BUCHAREST. ALTHOUGH PRIMARY PURPOSE OF 10-DAY VISIT WILL BE TO COLLECT INFORMATION FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF FORMAL TALKS WITH THE GOR, WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO RESUME IN DECEMBER, 1977, HE WILL ALSO MEET WITH GOR REPRESENTATIVES TO CLARIFY POINTS RAISED DURING THE JULY VISIT TO BUCHAREST OF ARCHBISHOP POGGI AND FATHER RUKOVSKY. (SEE AMBASSADOR BARNES' MEMCON OF JUNE 16, 1977.)

2. VATICAN OFFICIAL HAS TOLD US THAT THE JULY 3-11 TALKS HAD NOT GONE AS WELL AS VATICAN HAD EXPECTED. VATICAN DELEGATION WAS "TAKEN ABACK" WHEN GOR PROPOSED THAT THEY INITIATE DISCUSSIONS ON BASIS OF GLOBAL, RATHER THAN A SPECIFIC APPROACH, THAT IS TO START BY EXAMINING A STATUTO FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ROMANIA. THE VATICAN APPARENTLY WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO NEGOTIATE ON THIS BASIS AND WAS ONLY CONFIDENTIAL

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PREPARED TO DISCUSS QUESTIONS OF NOMINATIONS, STATUS OF RELIGIOUS AND CHURCH TERRITORIAL ARRANGEMENTS.

3. GOR APPARENTLY WANTS THE VATICAN TO PRESENT, AFTER CONSULTATIONS WITH ROMANIAN CATHOLIC CLERGY, A STATUTO FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ROMANIA, WHICH, WHEN APPROVED BY THE GOR, THROUGH SPECIAL DECREE,

WOULD FORMALLY RECOGNIZE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S EXISTENCE IN ROMANIA. VATICAN NOW BELIEVES THAT THERE WAS LOGIC IN GOR APPROACH AND HAS BEGUN DRAFTING A STATUTO. VATICAN STARTING POINT WOULD BE STATUTO PROPOSED BY ROMANIAN BISHOPS IN 1949 (AND FOR WHICH SEVERAL OF THEM WERE CHARGED WITH TREASON AND JAILED). GOR IS NOW PREPARED TO ACCEPT PRINCIPLE OF RECOGNITION OF "PAPAL PRIVILEGES" IN THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH (A TREASONABLE OFFENSE IN 1949), AND IT MIGHT ACCEPT VATICAN WISH TO HAVE THREE ADDITIONAL DIOCESES, MAKING A TOTAL OF FIVE. APPARENTLY, VATICAN HAS BEEN TOLD THAT THE GOR IS PREPARED TO CONSIDER BREAKING AN ADMINISTRATIVE RULE WHICH PROVIDES THAT CHURCH DIOCESES MUST HAVE AT LEAST 750,000 FAITHFUL, THUS MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TO HAVE FIVE DIOCESES FOR A POPULATION WICH NUMBERS BETWEEN 1.2 AND 1.5 MILLION CATHOLICS.

4. THE VATICAN PERCEIVES SOME DIFFICULTY IN NEGOTIATIONS IF THE GOR WERE TO INSIST THAT THERE BE A WAIVER INCLUDED IN THE STATUTO ON THE QUESTION OF THE UNIATE CHURCH. THE VATICAN WOULD BE SATISFIED IF GOR WOULD ACCEPT THE SATUTO AS REFERRING ONLY TO THE LATIN RIGHT CHURCH, THUS LEAVING, BY IMPLICATION, OPEN THE QUESTION OF THE GREEK
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CATHOLIC (I.E. UNIATE) CHURCH, WHICH WAS FORCEABLY INCORPORATED INTO ORTHODOX CHURCH IN 1948.

5. THE VATICAN EXPECTS THE GOR TO WAIVE THE RIGHT FOR CONSULTATIONS OR PRIOR APPROVAL ON VATICAN NOMINATIONS FOR BISHOPS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CASE OF MONSIGNOR AUGUSTINE, WHOM GOR WISHES TO HAVE ELEVATED TO BISHOPRIC OF TIMISOARA. APPARENTLY, THE VATICAN REFUSED TO ELEVATE MONSIGNOR AUGUSTINE IN 1955 ON WHAT IS NOW CONSIDERED "DISTORTED INFORMATION" ON HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE GOR, BUT IT IS NOW PREPARED TO PROMOTE HIM ON THE BASIS OF NEW INFORMATION AND BECAUSE OF HIS AGE--HE IS NOW 72 AND EXPECTED TO RETIRE BY THE AGE OF 75.

6. COMMENT: IT SEEMS THAT THE VATICAN, UPON REFLECTION, HAS ACCEPTED THE LOGIC" OF THE GOR GLOBAL APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS AND IS OPTIMISTIC THAT VATICAN-GOR PROTOCOL COULD BE NEGOTIATED BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR, WHICH WOULD LEGALIZE THE EXISTENCE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ROMANIA AND PROVIDE FOR IT A SUFFICIENT

SCOPE FOR PERFORMING ITS SPIRITUAL MISSION.
HOLMES

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